

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 4 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-44. (Canceled)

45. (New) An internet-based auction and payment system for facilitating participant initiated autonomous auction instances and book entry payment transfers between participant accounts maintained by the system for participants to make payments to other participants on the system for items won at the autonomous auction instances, the system comprising:

(a) a computer system in communication with the internet and capable of executing a plurality of substantially simultaneous processes;

(b) one or more processes executing on the computer system to perform the following:

(i) provide via the Internet a seller participant interface for a remote seller participant to select a predetermined item category from among a plurality of predetermined item categories, the category selection providing a further predetermined sub-category selection for item categorization, the item categorization corresponding to at least one or more goods and collectable categories;

(ii) provide to the remote participant seller, via the seller participant interface, a tool for the seller participant to initiate an autonomous ascending bid auction instance for an item in the seller participant selected category, the system autonomously presenting and auctioning the item with an ascending bid auction process to an open audience of internet participants; and

(iii) enable a buyer participant to pay for an item won at the autonomous ascending bid auction instance conducted by the system by connecting the buyer participant to an account maintained by the system and making a computer-implemented

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 5 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

book entry transaction between data records in a database to move an accounting for funds to an account maintained by the system for the seller participant to pay for an item won via the ascending bid auction process.

46. (New) The system of claim 45 further comprising one or more processes to clear a positive account balance for a participant account by one or more of the following:

- (a) print a check payable to the order of the associated participant; or
- (b) perform electronic fund transfer from a financial institution associated with the system to a financial institution associated with the participant.

47. (New) The system of claim 45 wherein credit card processing fees or external financial network charges are eliminated by use of positive available balances in the participant accounts in the buying and selling of collectable goods via the system by transferring accounting balances between the participant accounts maintained by the system.

48. (New) The system of claim 45 wherein the buyer participant accepts the offer for sale from the seller participant via the autonomous ascending bid auction process, wherein the seller participant previously purchased the item as a network participant in the system and the buyer participant initiates the system to clear the purchase by book entry transaction between the buyer participant account and the seller participant account.

49. (New) The system of claim 45 further comprising one or more processes to return an interest bearing accounting on positive balances maintained in the participant accounts of a plurality of internet users that maintain participant accounts with the system.

50. (New) An internet-based auction and transaction system for executing autonomous ascending bid auction instances for a plurality of independent participants in response to the initiation of the instances by the plurality of independent participants and for

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 6 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

establishing multiple participant accounts that can be debited and credited in accounting for the funds used and generated by participant transactions in the system, the system comprising:

(a) a computer system in communication with the Internet and capable of executing a plurality of substantially simultaneous processes;

(b) one or more processes executing on the computer system to perform the following:

(i) maintain multiple participant accounts, each account accessible based on information received from a participant, the multiple participant account balances capable of being debited and credited to account for the funds used and generated by participant transactions with the system;

(ii) automatically, in response to information received via a participant interface to the system, initiate an autonomous ascending bid auction selling process based at least in part on information electronically received from a participant acting as a seller participant in the system, the ascending bid auction selling process describing an item offered for sale via the system generated autonomous ascending bid auction process to potential buyer participants;

(iii) connecting a participant acting as a buyer in the system to at least one participant account maintained by the system and associated with the participant acting as the buyer in the system; and

(iv) clearing by book entry transaction the payment between the participant acting as the buyer in the system with the participant acting as the seller in the system by debiting the participant account of the participant acting as the buyer and crediting the participant account for the participant acting as the seller within the system, the transaction between the participant acting as the buyer in the system and the participant acting as the seller in the system being responsive at least in part to the participant acting as the buyer in the system winning an item at the autonomous ascending bid auction process that was generated by the system in response to the participant acting as a seller via the participant interface to the system.

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 7 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

51. (New) The internet-based auction and transaction system of claim 50, wherein the initiated selling process, generated in response to a participant input from a participant interface to the system where the participant is acting as a seller, comprises providing a predetermined category selection to the participant acting as the seller, the predetermined category selection providing a topical arrangement of selling instances to participants acting as buyers by maintaining a topical navigation scheme for participants acting as buyers to navigate a topically arranged interface to the system wherein the topical navigation scheme corresponds at least in part to the predetermined category selection provided to the participant acting as the seller with an interface providing a selection of a category for the selling instance.

52. (New) The internet-based auction and transaction system of claim 50, wherein the initiated selling instance, generated in response to a participant input from a participant interface to the system where the participant is acting as a seller, includes item description information and the system provides a unique code to confirm item listing to the participant acting as a seller.

53. (New) The internet-based auction and transactional system of claim 50, wherein:
the transactional system is under a first entity's control;
the information describing the item is offered for sale in an ascending bid auction mode and is received from a computer system independently operated by the participant acting as the seller; and
the auction process for the participant acting as the seller is initiated while the item remains outside the first entity's possession.

54. (New) The internet-based auction and transaction system of claim 50, wherein the auction process for the participant acting as the seller is initiated while the item remains outside the first entity's control.

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 8 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

55. (New) The internet based auction and transaction system of claim 50, wherein the auction process for the participant acting as the seller is initiated while the item remains in the control of the participant acting as the seller.

56. (New) An automated method, performed by a computer-based auction and transaction apparatus for conducting multiple simultaneous participant-to-participant autonomous ascending bid auctions via a connection to a data packet network and the world wide web in a fully automated, topically arranged system that can be navigated by topical categories, and wherein sellers and buyers can consummate transactions between accounts maintained by the system by book entry transaction, the computer-based auction and transaction apparatus being under the control of a first entity, the method comprising:

tracking a participant's account with the computer-based auction and transaction apparatus;

receiving via the data packet network from the participant acting as the seller a description of an item offered for auction, the received description including a category selected from a list of categories provided from the apparatus;

in response to receiving a description of an item for auction from the seller participant, generating a unique tracking identifier for the item;

displaying, in response to a search request from a participant acting as a buyer, the description of the item for auction in a presentation format via the world wide web, the display including advertisements that generate revenue for the auction system;

initiating an autonomous ascending bid auction process at the computer-based auction with the apparatus for an item posted by the seller participant, the auction being conducted while the item for auction remains outside of the first entity's possession;

receiving at least one bid for the item for auction from at least one bidder via a computer interface, an automated computer-implemented auction process processing the bid to determine whether to post the bid as the current high bid for the item for auction;

determining a final high bidder for the item via the computer-implemented auction process and notifying the high bidder that he or she is the winner of auction; and

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 9 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

clearing a payment by book entry transaction between a participant account that is tracked with the apparatus and associated with the winning bidder and an account that is tracked with the apparatus and associated with the seller participant for the item that was autonomously auctioned by the apparatus.

57. (New) An apparatus for conducting autonomous Internet auctions and for transferring funds between users of the system by book entry between user accounts associated with the apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

- a computer system operationally connected to the Internet;

- a process executing on the computer system for maintaining a participant's account associated with at least one selling participant;

- a storage device operationally connected to the computer system, the storage device storing a database of data records, the data record identifying an item to be auctioned by the computer system via an autonomous auction process;

- a data interface operationally connected to the computer system, the data interface providing electronic connectivity between the computer system and the Internet;

- a worldwide web-to-database mapping module, the worldwide web-to-database mapping module providing a link between a hypertext mark up language page server and the storage device;

- an electronic mail module operationally connected to the data interface and executing on the computer system, the electronic mail module providing an information link to the participant seller of the item for auction represented by a data record stored by the data storage device;

- the computer system executing an auction program that is an autonomous ascending bid auction process that is started by a remote selling participant; and

- a process executing on the computer system to verify a participant purchaser information and connect that participant to an deposit or charge account maintained by the system, and then authorizing that participant to execute a process on the apparatus to clear a charge from the result of an auction process by debiting the participant account for the purchase of an item won by participation with the autonomous ascending bid auction program and depositing an amount

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 10 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

representing the result of the auction process to the participant seller's account maintained by the apparatus by book entry transaction.

58. (New) The apparatus of claim 57 further comprising:

a process executing on the apparatus to credit a system account a transaction fee based at least in part on the result of the autonomous ascending bid auction program.

59. (New) The apparatus of claim 57 further comprising:

a process executing on the apparatus to extract a commission fee from the seller participant based at least in part on the result of the autonomous ascending bid auction program.

60. (New) An apparatus for conducting fully automated simultaneous Internet auctions and for transferring funds between users of the system by book entry transaction between user accounts associated with an accounts database, the apparatus comprising:

a computer system operationally connected to the Internet;

an accounts database operationally connected to the computer system;

a process executing on the computer system for maintaining a participant's account associated with a selling participant in the accounts database;

a storage device operationally connected to the computer system, the storage device storing a database of data records, the data record identifying an item to be auctioned by the computer system;

a data interface operationally connected to the computer system, the data interface providing electronic connectivity between the computer system and the Internet;

the computer system executing an auction program that executes an autonomous ascending bid auction in response to an input received from a remote selling participant; and

a process executing on the computer system to verify a participant purchaser information and connect that participant to an deposit or charge account maintained by the system, and then authorizing that participant to execute a process on the apparatus to clear a charge from the result of an auction process by debiting the participant account for the purchase and crediting an

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 11 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

amount representing the result of the auction process to the participant seller's account by book entry transaction.

61. (New) A method for a computer application program operated by a remote participant seller to coordinate the asynchronous generation and execution of an autonomous ascending bid auction process at a remote topically arranged internet-based auction system while the computer application program is isolated from communication with the internet-based auction system and to receive the proceeds from the result of the autonomous ascending bid auction process in an account tracked by the internet-based auction system that is accessible by book entry transaction with other accounts tracked by the system, the method performed by the computer application program in conjunction with the internet-based auction system comprising:

retrieving information about the topographical structure of the remote internet based-auction system from a data repository accessible while the computer application program is isolated from communication with the internet based auction system;

providing a selection of topographical categories and sub-categories for a user to select from when inputting data to build a data record of a good that will be subsequently posted into the internet-based auction system, the selection of topographical categories and sub-categories based at least in part from the information about the topographical structure of the remote internet-based auction system retrieved from the accessible data repository to assure proper linkage into the data structure maintained by the remote internet-based auction system when the computer application program subsequently communicates the data record of the good to create an auction instance for the good at the remote internet-based auction system;

providing a data input field to receive a descriptive short title for the good from a participant seller;

providing a data input field to receive a subjective textual description of the good from a participant seller;

generating a data header that contains at least a user identification code and an authorization password for communication with the remote internet-base auction system;

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 12 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

receiving scheduling information from a participant seller at the computer application program to (a) post the data record in the remote internet-based auction system to initiate an autonomous ascending bid auction instance at the remote internet-based computer system, (b) designate a time at which the computer application program will contact the remote internet-based auction system to post at least one data record to initiate an autonomous ascending bid auction instance for the at least one data record at the remote internet-based auction system or (c) post the data record in the remote internet-based auction system designating the good as on hold awaiting an autonomous ascending bid auction instance start date at the remote internet-based auction system and;

receiving the proceeds from the result of the autonomous auction instance from an internet bidder into an account maintained by the remote internet-based auction system the proceeds being transferred by book entry transaction to the account maintained for the seller.

62. (New) The method of claim 61 further comprising:

receiving input from the participant seller at the computer application program to designate whether the good may be viewed by an open audience of potential bidding participants in the internet-based auction system prior to the initiation of the autonomous ascending bid auction instance or whether the good may not be viewed by potential bidding participants in the internet-based auction system prior to the initiation of the automated ascending bid auction instance.

63. (New) The method of claim 61 further comprising:

receiving updates from the remote internet-based auction system about the structure of the topically arranged system maintained by the internet-based auction system and storing that updated structural information in a file accessible to the computer application program while the computer application program is not in communication with the internet-based auction system.

Applicant : Thomas G. Woolston
Serial No. : 09/557,617
Filed : April 25, 2000
Page : 13 of 33

Attorney's Docket No.: 13466-002011

64. (New) The method of claim 61 further comprising:
the initiation of an autonomous ascending bid auction instance by the computer
application program opening an ascending bid auction process to an open audience of a plurality
of internet participants at the remote internet-based auction system; and
the internet-based auction system automatically closing the auction process to the internet
participants based on a predetermined condition.